

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION EA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8048

INFO CINCPAC

S E C R E T MANILA 10614

LIMDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y FOR CLASSIFICATION

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DEPT PASS DEFENSE FOR ISA

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EIND, RP

SUBJECT: M-16 RIFLE MANUFACTURING PROJECT

1. DURING MY CONSULTATIONS IN WASHINGTON AND HONOLULU, I EXPRESSED REVSERVATIONS TO INTERESTED OFFICIALS ABOUT THE M-16 RIFLE MANUFACTURING PROJECT WHICH THE PHILIPPINES SEEKS TO FINANCE PARTIALLY UNDER U.S. MILITARY SALES ASSISTANCE. I STATED ON THOSE OCCASIONS THAT I PARTICULARLY DOUBTED THE ECONOMIC FEASIBILITY OF THE PROGRAM, GIVEN THE LIMITED MSA FUNDS AVAILABLE TO THE PHILIPPINES.

2. UPON MY RETURN TO MANILA, AND AFTER IN-DEPTH DISCUSSIONS OF THE PROPOSAL WITH MY COUNTRY TEAM, I HAVE WITHDRAWN THOSE RESERVATIONS AND RESOLVED THOSE DOUBTS. IN VIEW OF THIS CONVERSION, I HAVE SIGNED A

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LENGTHY CABLE WHICH WILL BE SENT FORWARD TODAY RECOMMENDING

POSITIVE WASHINGTON ACTION ON THIS SUBJECT.

3. IN ADDITION TO THE FORMAL RATIONALE OFFERED IN THAT CABLE, I BELIEVE WE HAVE TO RECOGNIZE THAT THIS PROJECT ASSUMES A CONSIDERABLE SYMBOLIC SIGNIFICANCE IN THE MINDS OF SENIOR PHILIPPINE DEFENSE AUTHORITIES WITH WHOM I HAVE DISCUSSED THE MATTER. IN THE LIGHT OF CONGRESSIONAL AND PUBLIC ATTITUDES DEVELOPING IN THE UNITED STATES, THEY FEEL IT PRUDENT, IF NOT IMPERATIVE, TO ASSUME THAT MILITARY SELF-RELIANCE (AT LEAST IN SMALL ARMS) MUST BE ACHIEVED BY THE PHILIPPINES IN THE TANGIBLE FUTURE. IF THEY CAN NOT RPT NOT HAVE THE AMERICAN M-16, WHICH THEY PREFER, THEY WILL TURN TO EITHER GERMAN OR ISRAELI SOURCES TO PROVIDE THEM WITH THE CAPABILITY TO MANUFACTURE THEIR OWN BASIC WEAPON.

4. IN MY JUDGMENT, THEREFORE, THE QUESTIONS AT ISSUE GO BEYOND THE MERE DOLLARS AND CENTS OF THE ECONOMICS INVOLVED. THEY ENTAIL BASIC POLITICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ATTITUDES, LARGELY STIMULATED BY U.S. ACTIONS AND STATEMENTS, WHICH WILL CONDITION OUR MILITARY RELATIONS HERE FOR SOME TIME TO COME. IF WE SHOW OUR CONFIDENCE NOT ONLY IN FILIPINO TECHNICAL CAPACITY TO ACHIEVE THIS PROJECT, BUT ALSO IN THEIR ABILITY TO HANDLE ITS CONSEQUENCES WITH WISDOM, THEY WILL FEEL A SENSE OF SATISFACTION GENERATED BY THE TRUST WE PLACE IN THEM. IF WE DISPLAY WHAT THEY WILL REGARD AS A LACK OF CONFIDENCE BY TURNING THEM DOWN, THEY WILL SUFFER A BLOW TO THEIR EGOS, FEEL A DEEPLY ROOTED DISSATISFACTION, AND POSSIBLY TURN TO SPITEFUL REACTIONS.

5. CONSEQUENTLY, I REQUEST THAT THE POLICY DECISION ON THIS MATTER BE MADE WITH DUE CONSIDERATION FOR THE WHOLE BROAD RANGE OF US-GOP MILITARY ASSOCIATIONS, INCLUDING DURABLE ACCESS TO U.S. BASES, AND NOT PURELY IN RELATIONSHIP TO THE BALANCED MANAGEMENT OF THE MILITARY SALES PROGRAM. SULLIVAN

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